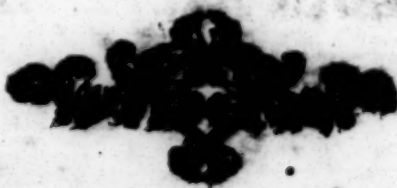


A
LETTER
TO A
COMMISSIONER
OF THE
INLAND NAVIGATION;
CONCERNING THE
Tyrone Collieries.



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LETTER

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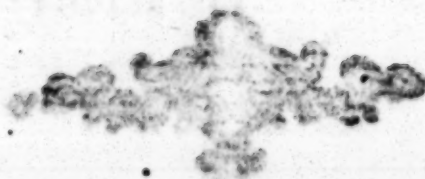
ENT TO

INLAND NAVIGATION

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James Collins



... in the ...



A
L E T T E R
TO A
C O M M I S S I O N E R
OF THE
Inland Navigation, &c.

S I R,

TH O' fomenting Jealousies and Complaints, in an Age that abounds in them, is by no means becoming an honest Man and a good Citizen, and is an Office I heartily abhor; yet, to be cold or



silent where a Nation is deeply interested, and as some imagine greatly injur'd, is infinitely more faulty, as well as dangerous. It is, with this Persuasion, Sir, that I have resolv'd to become a little Pamphlet Writer, and to promote an Enquiry into the Grounds of those Apprehensions which alarm us, in an Affair that is of no little Importance to *Ireland*.

If my Zeal shall prove needless, or my Reasonings inconclusive, I shall be as ready to acknowledge my Error, as I am to support what at present seems an evident Truth to me; and if the Gentlemen I attack, will either remove our Uneasiness, by a plain undisguis'd and candid Defence on a fair Enquiry, or by an open Confession of any Misconduct in their Proceedings, I shall be perfectly satisfied. After this little Introduction, I must tell you, Sir, that the Subject on which I address you and the Publick, is the very unaccountable Management of the Proprietors of the *Tyrone* Collieries, which, I find, many worthy Friends of our Country, not a little dissatisfied about: And, as I think their Arguments very strong, and Appearances at least very foreboding, and gloomy, I think they deserve

serve to be consider'd, and debated ; and that the Publick should know, whether they are to be served by real Advantages from this Company, or bubbled by specious Words and false Palliatives, or weak Excuses, for their Mistakes, Delays, or Neglects.

When the Proprietors of the *Tyrone* Collieries first form'd themselves into a Company, it is well known what Promises were made the Kingdom, and what Hopes every one (who knew the vast Sums which were annually drained from us, for that Commodity) form'd, of seeing us turn that Cash to better Purposes at home. With these salutary Prospects, the Northern Canal from *Lough-Neagh*, to *Newry*, was chearfully undertaken by the Nation ; and, after very large Sums expended, which were greatly encreased by the Mis-calculations or Mis-conduct of the Managers employed in it, in a very good Measure, as every one supposed, brought to Perfection. It is true, the Carriage of all Sorts of Goods, from the Country adjacent to that *Lough*, and its neighbouring Rivers, was a secondary Motive to forming that Canal ; but it is certain, that the supplying *Dublin*, *Drogheda* ; and all the Eastern Coast of the Kingdom, with the *Tyrone*

rone Coal, was the great Primary Motive for that large Expence and Labour. I will not, Sir, examine at present how far the Money that was given by Parliament to form that Canal, was either skillfully or honestly applied, which may be the Subject of another Enquiry: But what immediately relates to my present Subject, is, that I do not find that the Proprietors of the *Tyrone* Collieries, have in any due Proportion, Care, or Activity, brought to Perfection any Works that answer the Design of the Canal, if it had been ever so well or so honestly executed. Is not this a deplorable Mismanagement! and how can the Gentlemen concerned clear themselves from the severe Reflections that every honest Breast must feel, that considers how much was justly expected from them, and how little they have done? It is above twenty Years, since this wonder-working Canal was first set about, and, except a few Puffs in *Faulkner's* News-Papers, what Relief has the City of *Dublin* had, by the mighty Produce of the *Tyrone* Collieries? Have the *Whitehaven* Coals been in any sort beaten down in their Price, or lessen'd in the Quantities imported? Nay, have we not seen, in some Winters, their Prices rais'd to the most exorbitant Degree, our poor Manufacturers

nufacturers starved, and their Labours stopt, without so much as one Ship-load of our own Coals coming to relieve them in their Miseries ?

Nay, I must go yet farther, with my Complaints, Sir, to you, and the Publick on this Point ; for, after all the Boasts of the Benefits we were to receive from these Gentlemen the Proprietors, I do not yet see, nor has the Public got the least Proof, that they have a sufficient Quantity of Coal in their Power, to answer the necessary Demands of our People for it ; and, probably, after all our Hopes, and all our Expences, we shall find our last Resource, must be our old Supplies from *Whitehaven*. Even if they should tell Us, with their usual Boasts, and Confidence, that they have a sufficient Quantity for all our Demands I cannot help carrying on my Apprehensions, that the Goodness of their Coal will be able to rival those of our *English* Neighbours ; or, to deserve the Encouragement of our own Countrymen, so far, as to buy them, and burn them. There is great Reason to doubt, particularly, whether they can really supply us with the true Cakeing Coal, which the *Whitehaven* Collieries have so long been famous for : Or,
if

if they have, whether it lies near enough to the Canal, to save enhancing its Price, by a long and expensive Land-Carriage.

It is true; I have been told, I know not how truly, Sir, that there is a small Part of my Lord *Primate's* Lands, where such Coal may be found, conveniently enough, but, as I never viewed the Ground, or tried the Coal myself, I cannot depend much on my Information.

But allowing, Sir, that this Fact is true; what a way must we be in, who have only this Pittance to depend on, to answer the vast Demand of a large encreasing City for Years, nay, I hope, for Ages? Besides, Sir, I must observe to you, that there is another terrible Obstacle in the way of our Relief from this part of the Country, where my Lord *Primate's* boasted Coal lies; for I am assur'd, that it is fully three Miles from the Head of the Canal; and if so, how will it be possible to bring it to *Dublin*, so cheap as to beat down the Price of the *Whitehaven* Coal, considering the additional Charge of Land-Carriage for so great a way?

These

These, Sir, are sufficient Grounds for the Fears of those who think for us, and are jealous of these Gentlemen making good their Boasts, and our Hopes too fondly built on them; and yet it gives me real Concern, that I am under a Necessity of laying several others before you, and the Publick.

For in the first Place, Sir, I do not find that the Proprietors have any proper Descent for a Waggon way, as they have on the other side of the Water, where, with so amazing a Facility and Art, they bring so many Tun in a single Waggon, steer'd only by a single Man, from the Pit to the Ship, at the most trifling Expence: But, if there be such a Descent, I am confident, it must be form'd by an infinite Expence of Banking, and raising, and levelling of Grounds, and tho' we should suppose the Proprietors able or willing to bear such an Expence; pray let it be considered, how much they must raise the Price of their Coal to refund themselves; and let them reflect how far the Parliament will think fit to remove this Objection, by giving any Assistance to such a Company who have undertaken so much, and have done (as far as yet appears) so very little.

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Let me add to this bad account of Things, that I do not find by all the Enquiry I could make, that these Gentlemen have so much as set up one Fire Engine ; and a Colliery, without a Fire Engine, is in as bad a Condition in Case of Water, as a leaky Ship in a Storm, without a Pump, and must be destroyed as inevitably : Nay, I cannot hear of any other Engine that they have provided for effectually clearing the Lord Primate's Colliery of the subterraneous Water, that molest it, and, without such necessary Remedies, must ruin it entirely ; nor do I conceive, by what Means they pretend, or can rationally think of working the Pits there, so as to make them of real Service, or a national Benefit.

There are other Batteries to be raised against these Gentlemen and their Works, if what I have already troubled you with, was not enough to over-turn them and our Hopes in them ; for I am told by Eye Witnesses, and good Judges, of these Matters, that the Coal which they raise at present in the *Stewart's Town Collieries*, is absolutely faulty in itself, and of a bad Quality, to that Degree, that it is only fit for the use of Smiths
or

or fitter to burn Lime or Bricks, &c. than to burn in our Chimnies; so that if this be confess'd, Sir, (and how it can be denied I don't conceive) here is a Defect in Nature and utterly incurable and unavoidable, but were all these Points more uncertain, Sir, than our Fears represent them, I believe those who know these Collieries best, are of Opinion, that the Proprietors have really no Body of Coal, which they can properly depend on, in any of the Works they have set up within the Limits of their Partnership. It is speaking with all Indulgence to their Design, and the Success of their Scheme, if we make an Exception, as to this Point, in Favour of the Primate's Colliery, which confessedly bids fairest for answering their Purpose; and yet I imagine, with good Grounds, it will puzzle the wisest of them, to speak with any rational Foundation, as to the selling the Lord Primate's Coals so cheap in *Dublin*, as to keep down the Rate of those which are brought us from the other Side of the Water. Nay, what is still more alarming, is, that I see no probable Hope, if they could beat down the *Whitehaven* Coal, that (as Things have hitherto at least been manag'd) they can, for a great Tract of Time to come, be able to furnish the City of *Dublin* and *Drogheda*, with 20,000 Tuns of

Coals yearly, *from that Colliery*. These, Sir, are the great Sources of the Fears of many real Friends to this Kingdom, in Regard to this favourite Scheme of supplying us with Coals from our own Country, and furnished by the Labour of our own People. I doubt they will be found strong enough to sap the very Foundation of all those pleasing Imaginations, which we used to indulge ourselves in. I have ranged these Objections together, in the same Order they came into my Mind, which chiefly affect the *Tyrone Collieries* as to the Coal, and the Difficulties that attend them; but, Sir, I have some others of equal Importance, which alarm every thinking Man as much, as to their Conveyance by the *Lough-neagh Canal*, and which are too many to be forgotten, and I doubt too strong to be answer'd by the Gentlemen concern'd with all their imaginary Projects of helping us. You will weigh them, Sir, with the same Candour and good Will they are written, and though they may seem needless after all the former Objections, and like a murdering Piece (in the phrase of your beloved *Shakespeare*) to give superfluous Death, yet I shall set them down, and end your Trouble with this *Coup de Grace*, to the *Tyrone Projectors*.

In

In the first Place, then, I would ask these good Gentlemen, whether the *Lough-Neagh* Canals are not really, and in Truth, extremely defective, and incompleatly finish'd; and if they are so, whether they have (as infallibly it was their Duty to do) represented this terrible Circumstance to the Honourable, the Commissioners of the Inland Navigation, and, if they have any Grounds to hope for any Assistance from them, to help those Defects? But, Sir, if that worthy Board out of their warmest Zeal to serve their Country, should incline to assist them, and repair any Defects in the Canal, for God's-sake, consider, Sir, how they can effect it: For if it is supposed by the best Judges I have convers'd with, as it generally is, that the high Level in the *Newry* Canal, can never be supplied with Water so effectually, as to make it navigable in the Heats of Summer, how will it be possible, that sufficient Quantities of Coals from any of their Collieries, can be navigated from thence to *Dublin*? But further, Sir, I would beg to be informed with Candour, and Truth, whether there are not also several other terrible Obstacles, and of such a Nature as are not capable of being remedied, and which, it is demonstrable from the

the very Nature of Things, will constantly, and invincibly, put a Stop to the Inland Navigation in Dry Seasons? Let the warmest Zealots, for this mighty Design of procuring us Coals of our own, speak out with Openness and Candour, and tell us if there are not Bars of sand in *Lough-Neagh*, before the Mouths of the *Ban* and *Black Water*, and whether with all their Art, and tho' they rouse themselves ever so much from their former Sleepyness, they can hope ever to remove them? If they pretend to say, that they can be removed, let them be so good as to explain the Manner how they propose to accomplish it; and at the same time, let them tell the World if it be practicable to raise Banks for the tracking of Boats, on the Sides of the *Ban* and *Black-water*, where those two Streams, so notorious for overflowing, are made Part of the Inland Navigation, and certainly, all will allow, that without Banks for tracking the Boats, it will be quite impossible to carry on the Inland Navigation, and convey their Coals in those Rivers.

But there are Difficulties still to be removed, as to the very Locks which are already erected on the *Canal*, and which, I would be glad they could effectually answer; and particularly

ticularly let them tell us, Sir, if there be even one of them, that is absolutely, nay, tolerably stanch, so as to hold Water, as it ought to do, and is there not in every one of them, an immense Waste of Water?

And here, Sir, I shall put an end to your Trouble and mine, in asking Questions, which I am very apprehensive, can never be answered by the Proprietors of the *Tyrone* Collieries, and which I call on them in behalf of the Publick, either to answer fairly, or modestly to give up their Cause by their Silence. For if upon the whole, Sir, it plainly appears by what I have said, that there is no reasonable Foundation to expect that the Canal will ever be completed, so as to enable them to bring their Coals to *Dublin*, and undersel those from *Whitehaven*, and if the other Objections I have hinted, cannot be in their Power to remove; how vain is their pleasing Dream of annually saving so much Money to the Nation by their Project; even admitting, that there should be no want of Coal in their Collieries, and allowing that their Works can be properly carried on, and that they will be sold (as they ought to be) at the lowest Price we can expect; all which I have already shown, are accompanied with vast Difficulties,

ficulties, of which every candid Reader will best judge.

The Subject I have handled, fully deserves to be considered, by all who wish us well, and as I may, in the Warmth of writing, have run into too great a Confusion of Thoughts and Words, I beg Leave, Sir, to give you, and the Gentlemen Proprietors of the *Tyrone* Collieries, a short Abstract of my Letter in the following Queries, which the Publick will expect to have answered fully and fairly.

Q U E R E the 1st.

What has been the Expence of the Northern Canals, and if the Publick had any other Intent in that great Work, than the immediate supplying of *Dublin*, and other Parts of the Eastern Coast of the Kingdom with Coals from their Works ?

II. What

II.

What Works have you carried on, and brought to Perfection, in order to answer that Intention ?

III.

Are not Twenty Years elapsed, since the beginning the Canal, and what Coals have been sent to *Dublin*, from any of your Collieries in all that Time ?

IV.

Have you satisfied the Publick, that you have in your Power a sufficient Quantity of Coal, answerable to the Demand that there will be for it ?

V.

If your Quantity is sufficient, will it answer in point of Goodness, so as to be saleable at *Dublin* ?

C

VI. Have



VI.

Have you any of the Cakeing Coal, and how near does it lie to the Head of the Canal ?

VII.

Have you any of this Coal except in a small Tract of the Lord Primate's Estate ?

VIII.

Is there any Probability, that there is in this Tract, a Sufficiency for the supplying the Demand that there will be for it in the City of *Dublin* ?

IX.

Is not the Distance of this Coal, at least, three Miles from the Head of the Canal, and will

will not the Expence of the Land Carriage make it impracticable to have it sold at *Dublin*, at an Under-price to that of the *Whitehaven* Coal ?

X.

Have you a Descent for a Waggon Way ? If there be, at whose Expence will it be made, and at what Price will the Coal be put on Board, at the Head of the Canal, in order to its being brought to *Dublin* ?

XI.

Have you a Fire Engine, or what other Engine for pumping up your Water in the Lord Primate's Collieries, or by what Means do you propose to carry on a Work of Consequence there ?

XII.

Is not the Coal you now raise in the *Stewart's Town* Collieries, of a bad Quality, and fit

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only

only for the use of Smiths, or for the burning of Lime and Bricks ?

XIII.

Is it not notorious to all that Country, that you have no Body of Coal to be depended on, in any of the Works you have within the Limits belonging to your Partnership, except, perhaps, in the Lord Primate's Collieries, and what can you say with certainty, as to the Price the Lord Primate's Coal can be sold for in *Dublin* ?

XIV.

At what Time will you be prepared to supply the City of *Dublin* with 20,000 Tuns of Coal yearly ?

XV.

If you say that the Canals are imperfect and defective, is it not properly your Business

ness to represent this to the Navigation Board ?

XVI.

Is it true that the high Level in the *Newry* Canal, can never be supplied with Water, so as to make it navigable at all Times ; and if so, how is it possible that any Quantity of Coal from any of your Collieries can be brought to *Dublin* ?

XVII,

Are there not also other Obstacles, and such as cannot be removed, and which it is evident, from the Nature of them, will perpetually stop the Inland Navigation in dry Seasons.

XVIII.

Are there not Bars of Sand in *Lough-neagh*, before the Mouths of the *Ban* and *Black-water*,

water, and how is it possible to remove them?

XIX.

If these can be removed, is it practicable to raise Banks on the Sides of the *Ban* and *Black-water*, where those Rivers are made Part of the Inland Navigation, and without Banks for the Tracking of the Boats, how is it possible to carry on the Inland Navigation on those Rivers?

XX.

As to the Locks already made, is there one of them so strong as to hold Water, and is there not in every one of them an immense waste of Water?

XXI. IF

XXI.

If, on the Whole, the Canals cannot be compleated, and the other Objections against your Collieries can't be removed, how is it possible your Project can succeed, or the Nation be benefited by it ?



F I N I S.